

Comments on NPRM to Eliminate Morse Code as a Requirement for Amateur HF License Privileges

First, let me just state that I am a 20wpm Extra Class license holder who has no love for code, has never actually used it on the air, and – in fact – actually had to repeat the 20 word exam four times over the course of a year before finally passing it. In spite of the trouble I had mastering it and my personal indifference toward using it, I can understand why it has great appeal to many hams; it is a unique, historically significant mode of communication. I thoroughly enjoy restoring and using antique radio equipment, but realize that passion is not for everyone and would never try to create regulations that would impose that pastime as a requirement for anyone else. I am also NOT one of the “I had to do it, so should you” types, and so find myself in complete agreement with the FCC’s proposal to eliminate the CW requirement as a license qualifier for HF privileges. One of Amateur Radio’s chartered purposes is to “advance the art of radio.” With this in mind, I’ve never understood the point in proving even rudimentary proficiency in a mode of communication that is over 100 years old; Morse Code has been around longer than radio itself!

Much commentary has been written over the past few years regarding the increasing age of the amateur community, as well as our decreasing appeal to younger generations. These are both very valid concerns that deserve serious consideration, introspection, and – ultimately - action on the part of the ham community. It is a known fact that Morse Code presently stands as a barrier to progression for those licensees wishing to gain HF privileges; a barrier which some never overcome. An individual’s lack of desire, or inability to master the code should never be confused with lack of intelligence, or inability to make a significant contribution to the radio community! We need to be eliminating – not creating, or maintaining - barriers now, *before* the hobby we love goes the way of the dinosaur.

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